HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

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ANNUAL REPORT

of the

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

for the year

1949

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical Officer for North Herts Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Officer,
12 Brand Street, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 107)

Senior Sanitary Inspector:
SAMUEL T. GUNNING, Cert. S.I.E.B., F.S.I.A.

Additional Inspector:
ROBERT B. BOLT, Cert. S.I.E.J.B., M.S.I.A.

Council Offices,
21 Bancroft, Hitchin.
(Phone: Hitchin 1112-5)

WM. E. POTTER, Clerk to the Council.

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have the honour to present this Annual Report for 1949 drawn up in accordance with the directions of Ministry of Health Circular 2/50.

The vital statistics for the year again compare favourably with those for England and Wales. Despite some loading of the older age groups there is a marked rise in the birth rate over the previous year, with a figure above the national rate. The infant mortality rate is once again favourable and serious infectious disease has been almost absent from the district. The death rate (11.7) is identical with that for England and Wales but upon application of the Comparability Factor of 0.90 supplied by the Registrar General a Standardised Death Rate of 10.6 is obtained.

In the compilation of this report I would acknowledge the great assistance of your Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. S. T. Gunning, who is responsible for the content of Sections C to E. I would also record having received from your Council and its chief officers the utmost consideration and help during the year.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
VICTOR R. WALKER
District Medical Officer of Health

July 1950

SECTION A

LOCAL STATISTICS

Area (in acres)	82,559
Civilian population - Registrar-General's estimate for mid-1949	21,510
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April, 1950	6,534
Rateable Value (1st April, 1950) unreduced	£104,494
Rateable Value (1st April, 1950) reduced	£102,138
Sum represented by Penny Rate (Estimate 1950/51)	£410

Extracts from Vital Statistics for the year 1949

	Totals	M.	F.	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable Rates for England & Wales
LIVE BIRTHS (Legitimate	358	180	178		
(Illegitimate	16	12	4		
(All	374	192	182		
Rate per 1,000 of the est. resident population				17.4	16.7
	Totals	M.	F.		
STILLBIRTHS (Legitimate	9	6	3		
(Illegitimate	3	3	-		
(All	12	9	3		
Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births				31	23
	Totals	M.	F.		
DEATHS	251	111	140		
Rate per 1,000 of the est. resident population				11.7	11.7

DEATHRATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE

All infants per 1,000 live births		21	32
Legitimate infants per 1,000 legitimate births	22		
Illegitimate infants per 1,000 illegitimate births	Nil		

Actual number of deaths under 1 year:

Legitimate	8
Illegitimate	-
	8

Deaths from Puerperal causes	-
Deaths from Cancer (all ages)	39
Deaths from Measles (all ages)	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough (all ages)	-
Deaths from Diarrhoea (under 2 years of age)	-

Comment on local vital statistics

The estimate of the total civilian population in the district for mid-1949 shows a reduction of 170 on the previous year.

The birth rate of 17.4 has risen considerably over the district rate for 1948 (16.2).

The death rate of 11.7, while identical with that for England and Wales, has risen considerably over the record low district rate for 1948 (10.4).

The infant mortality rate of 21 per 1,000 is again very favourable and no death from acute infectious disease was recorded.

Principal Causes of Death

Of the total of 251 deaths, 83 were attributed to Heart and Other Circulatory Diseases, 39 to Cancer (all sites), 22 to Respiratory Diseases and 6 to Tuberculosis; 4 were due to Road Traffic Accidents.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

There was no important change during the year.

SECTION C

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

Considerable attention has again been given to the question of bringing piped water supplies to as many villages as possible and it is pleasing to be able to record some progress despite the nation-wide economic difficulties. Consent has been received for the laying of water mains from Offley to Pirton and from Lilley to Hexton and the necessary pipes and fittings ordered; owing to long delay in delivery it is anticipated that work will commence in October 1950.

The Ministry of Health have since held a local enquiry into the major comprehensive water scheme and a decision is still awaited. Such scheme includes the laying of water mains to the villages of Bygrave, Newnham and Langley.

In addition to the above schemes, a number of small extensions of mains have been made to provide piped supplies and in some cases contributions under the Water Act 1945 have been received from the owners of the properties concerned towards the cost.

Owing to trouble in the Pirton borehole this station had to be closed down and a temporary main was laid from the Hitchin Urban District Council pumping station at Oughton Head to supply Pirton and Holwell with water until the main from Offley is completed.

The well at Ashwell has also caused considerable anxiety due to a drop in water level, and it was necessary to lay an emergency water main from the Biggleswade Water Board's main from Edworth to supply Ashwell and Hinxworth. Work is to commence shortly to deepen the borehole in the well at Ashwell which is hoped to improve conditions there.

Water Analysis

Table of Results

Two tables of sampling are submitted herewith -

I. Taken by the Council's Engineer & Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.

II. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table I.

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	6	2	4	-	-
Codicote	4	4	-	-	-
King's Walden	6	3	-	3	-
Peter's Green	6	3	3	-	-
Pirton	2	-	1	1	-
Wymondley	5	3	2	-	-
Braughing	12	-	-	12	-
Totals	41	15	10	16	-

Table II

		No. taken	Satis-factory	Unsatis-factory
1.	Council Undertakings			
	Offley-Lilley scheme	63	53	10
	Hitchin-Braughing	49	46	3
	Ashwell	14	14	-
	Codicote	10	9	1
	Wymondley	5	5	-
	Pirton	7	6	1
	Peter's Green	7	7	-
2.	Private Undertakings			
	Knebworth	17	16	1
	Bygrave	8	2	6
	Newnham (Mr. Farr's supply)	3	-	3
3.	Bulk Supplies			
	Hitchin U.D. (Ickleford)	14	11	3
	Stevenage U.D. (Graveley and Todd's Green)	3	3	-
	Hertford R.D. (Shephall)	7	6	1
4.	Other Sources			
	Hexton Pump	6	-	6
	Langley	5	1	4
	Radwell	6	3	3
	Newnham (Council cottages)	2	2	-
	Special samples (private sups.)	15	6	9
		241	190	51

Sewers and Sewage Disposal

A considerable amount of preparatory work for the various schemes has now been completed and the schemes for Barkway, Breachwood Green, Lilley, Offley, Gt. Wymondley, Lt. Wymondley, St.Ippollitts, Kimpton, Whitwell and Weston are in readiness. The Consulting Engineers' reports on these schemes have been submitted to the County Council for their observations which have now been received. Clearance under Section 35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1947 has also been obtained for the use of the various sites for sewage treatment plant and the Parish Councils and Catchment Boards have been consulted.

In certain schemes the Ministry of Health have notified their intention to hold a local enquiry and Messrs. D. Balfour & Sons are preparing the necessary additional information. It is hoped that the next year will see a definite stride forward as regards at least some of these village schemes.

Separate from the village schemes, a number of small sewage treatment plants have been put into operation to deal with the sewerage from your new housing estates at Reed, Preston, Graveley, Hinxworth and Therfield. These have been so designed that where appropriate they can be readily extended to take the drainage from your older properties at some future date.

Public Cleansing Service

The beneficial effect of the re-organisation of this service during the previous year has been fully realised during the year under review. Regularity is now the outstanding feature of the service, while the arrangement covering public holidays whereby no part of the district is missed even for one period is much appreciated and this is evidenced by the small number of complaints received. The outstanding disadvantage in this service is the existing garage and petrol situation. The vehicles are stored in three separate garages while petrol supplies are taken from the Hitchin Urban supply - one mile, one and three-quarter miles and over three miles from the respective garages, rendering supervision difficult. These conditions should shortly be remedied, following approval by the Ministry of Health of proposals for a central depot at Gosmore Ley.

Statistics for the year under review are compared with the previous year as follows:-

	No. of Loads	Approx. weight of all materials collected	Vehicle mileage
1949	1729	4545 tons	38699 (inc. foreman's van)
1948	1671	3554	28148

Cesspool Emptying

As evidence of the further expansion of this service, suggesting it has nearly reached the limit of its present capacity, figures for the year under review together with those for the preceding year are submitted below.

No. of Cesspools emptied at -

	Houses in private ownership		Council Houses		Loads from Sewage Works	Pails emptied
	Free	Chargeable	Free	Chargeable		
1949	308	126	32	206	329	2641
1948	287	78	27	82	339	476*

* This service commenced in June 1948.

The disposal of all materials collected by this service is now directed on to agricultural land. Only in great urgency or to control a fire are the contents of the cesspool-emptier deposited on refuse tips.

The approximate waiting time for the cesspool emptying service from the date of application varies according to the time of year from three weeks during the first three months to four to five days at other times. It is evident that any further extension of the service can only be undertaken if additional vehicle capacity is available.

Salvage

In common with most local authorities salvage collection and disposal figures show a reduction on previous years. Whereas in 1948 64 tons of collected salvage was sold for £269. 7. 0d., the year 1949 shows a collection figure of 53¾ tons realising £180. 2. 6d., the decline being greater on the income side owing to reduced prices obtainable for

salvaged materials. The salvage collection service, mainly of waste paper, continues to be operated.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act, 1949

Prior to the coming into operation of this Act, and following the delegation of powers by the County Council, a joint scheme was prepared by a small Committee of this Council and two adjoining authorities. This was approved by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries as the Hitchin & Welwyn Rural and Royston Urban Joint Pests Control Scheme.

The Scheme, which came into operation on June 1st 1949 is worked from the offices of the Hitchin Rural Council, under the control of its Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. S. T. Gunning. One full-time rodent operator was appointed. He is provided with a light van specially fitted for carrying the necessary equipment and poisons. All complaints and requests for service made to the constituent authorities are dealt with from the Hitchin office, and the operator's time with each authority is, as far as practicable, proportionate to the populations of the respective districts.

A Survey of the results obtained in the initial stages of the scheme, shows that some useful work is being done. Statistics up to the end of the year under review are as follows:-

HITCHIN & WELWYN RURAL & ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS
JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

SUMMARY

JUNE 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1949

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF HOURS WORKED						NO. OF RATS AND/OR MICE PICKED UP *
	SEWERS	REFUSE TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUSINESS PREMISES	BLOCK INSPECTION	TOTAL	
HITCHIN R.D.C.	59¾	251¾	277½	101	73	763	635
WELWYN R.D.C.	16¼	43¾	34	21	11	126	163
ROYSTON U.D.C.	14¼	55½	71¼	29	13½	183½	131
	90¼	351	382¾	151	97½	1072½	929

Other figures - Total mileage covered by vehicle - 4960
Petrol used 150 gals.
Approx.miles per gal. 33.1

Total time spent on mixing bait, vehicle maintenance etc.	252½
Total hours worked -	1325

* from Sept. to Dec.

Sanitary Inspection of the Area

Analysis of the number of inspections carried out by your two Inspectors again shows that a considerable volume of work is handled with a minimum of Statutory Notices.

The number of inspections for all purposes was 2746, detailed as follows:-

For defects under the Housing Acts	379
For defects under the Factory Acts	35
For the prevention of Infectious Disease	49
As to the sanitary condition of Schools and Public Halls.	12
Inspections under the Milk & Dairies Order	121
Inspections of Slaughter-houses, butchers' shops etc. ...	62
For the prevention of Nuisances...	389
Inspections of drainage, conversions etc.	194
Inspections of water supplies and sampling	136
Supervision of Refuse Collection and Salvage Disposal...	649
Inspections re Rats and Mice Destruction	127
Inspections under Shops Act 1934..	49
Miscellaneous Inspections...	261
Inspections of Moveable Dwellings	65
Food & Drugs Act (inc. Ice-Cream supervision).	218
	2746

SECTION D

Housing

As my knowledge of the Hitchin Rural area increases, I am impressed with the untiring efforts of your Council to provide adequate housing accommodation of an acceptable standard but a review of the present position, despite the fact that the Council now own and control approximately 20% of the dwelling houses in the area, shows solution of the problem is by no means in sight.

During the year ended December 31st 1949 the Council erected 87 permanent dwelling houses, while private enterprise under licence provided 16 dwellings - a total of 103 for the year.

The programme for the current year is being pursued with vigour, and additional allocations are being sought from the Ministry.

The Housing waiting-list, which is constantly under review with daily corrections, still stands at over 1000 - the actual figure at March 31st 1950 was 1095.

Housing, Re-conditioning of.

This phase of housing activity is proceeding only very slowly. Many seemingly legitimate reasons can be advanced in explanation but it does appear that some useful work for both improving and increasing existing accommodation could be effected by a scheme carefully devised and executed under the improvement sections of the Housing Act 1949. As a basis for such a scheme useful information could be obtained from the Rural Housing Survey records.

Sanitary Improvements

Much useful work which could be done for the sanitary improvement of existing dwellings is being held up for two main reasons. First, owners are awaiting the provision of sewers (as envisaged in the earlier part of this report under the heading "Sewers and Sewage Disposal"); the second reason has some relation to my remarks in the previous paragraph re improvement grants.

One can but express the hope that easing of controls and improved supply of necessary materials will make any improvement schemes both attractive and desirable.

Extensive sanitary improvements were carried out under licence to 57 properties during the year.

SECTION E

Inspection and Supervision of Food

a. Milk. On the Appointed Day, which duly arrived during the year now reviewed, the great change in the supervision of Milk Production took place, responsibility for this aspect being taken over by the Ministry of Agriculture, leaving with the local authority responsibility in respect of retail distribution.

An encouraging feature, of which notice should be

taken, is the increasing number of distributors who have applied for licences to retail Tuberculin Tested and/or Pasteurised milk.

The responsibility for sampling milk during supply to the consumer rests with the District Council.

The standard of milk produced and retailed in the district is reflected in the following results of samples taken from various sources:-

Summary of Milk Samples taken during 1949 -

Sampling Authority	Designated & School milks		Non-designated milks		Tubercule Bacilli		
	Satisfied	Failed	Satisfied	Failed	Pos.	Neg.	No Result
Herts. County Council	204	28	4	7	-	-	-
Other Authorities	27	12	15	9	-	39	-
Hitchin Rural Dist. Council	-	-	8	5	-	-	-
TOTAL	231	40	27	21	-	39	-

Total No. of samples - 358

No. of Brucella Abortus Cultures positive - 4

b. Meat and Other Foods. No slaughter-houses actually operate within the Hitchin Rural District except for occasional emergency slaughtering, for which purpose the 13 usable slaughter-houses in the district are kept licensed.

Frequent inspections of butchers' shops and meat stores are made, while a close liaison is maintained with colleagues responsible for meat inspection in the Government slaughter-house at Letchworth, whose ready co-operation is fully appreciated.

The amount of food condemned as unsound and unfit during the year was as follows:-

	Cwts.	Qtrs.	Lbs.
Tinned Food	1	1	16½
Eggs	1	1	15
Cheese	-	-	2
Fish	-	1	21
Total	3	-	26½

The present position with reference to the inspection of food premises, and supervision of food preparation, is far from satisfactory since your two Inspectors appear to be very fully employed in other branches of the work, to the detriment of this important service for the protection of the public.

c. Food Poisoning Outbreaks. There was no record, either formal or informal, of any such occurrence in your district during the year.

d. Factories Act 1937. The table which follows is taken from the report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572, in accordance with the requirements of the Ministry's Circular.

Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health (including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Register	Number of -		
		Inspections	Written notices	Occupiers prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs.1,2, 3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by Local Authorities	85	16	2	Nil
(ii) Factories not inc. in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Auth.	12	19	2	"
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl.Outworkers)	-	-	-	"
Total	97	35	4	-

2. Cases in which Defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found				No. of prosecutions
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	
Want of cleanliness	2	2	Nil	Nil	Nil
Overcrowding	Nil		"	"	"
Unreasonable temp.	"		"	"	"
Inadequate ventil.	"		"	"	"
Ineffective drainage of floors	1	1	"	"	"
Sanitary conveniences					
(a) Insufficient	2	2	"	1	"
(b) Unsuitable or defective	2	2	"	1	"
(c) Not sep.for sexes	1	1	"	1	"
Other offences against the Act	Nil		"	Nil	"
Total	8	8	-	3	-

Outworkers. There are 21 outworkers reported in the District.

SECTION F.

Prevalence of, and Control over, Infectious and Other Diseases

During the year notifications of infectious diseases (after correction of diagnosis) were: Measles 55, whooping cough 56, chickenpox 52, scarlet fever 13, pneumonia 1, dysentery 1 puerperal pyrexia 1. The local share of the nation wide recurrence of poliomyelitis was one single confirmed case of paralytic type (in a schoolgirl at Kimpton). No case of enteric disease or food poisoning was notified.

Scarlet Fever cases were sporadically distributed and this illness continues of mild severity and infectivity, falling almost wholly on the 3 - 10 year old age group. There was some grouping of cases in the St.Ippollitts and Wymondley area in the fourth quarter.

The main incidence of measles and whooping cough were in the first quarter of the year, their prevalence being relatively low.

Diphtheria. For another year no case was confirmed in the district. Despite continued absence from the area the offer of protection of infants by immunisation continued to be accepted by a large majority of parents.

Tuberculosis - New Cases and Deaths During the Year

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory.		Non-Respiratory.		Respiratory.		Non-Respirato	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	1	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	3	1	-	1	1	-	1	-
35 - 45	2	2	1	-	1	1	-	-
45 - 55	3	1	-	-	1	-	1	-
55 - 65	-	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
and over	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
Totals	10	5	2	4	5	1	2	-

Compared with the previous year the number of new cases notified was almost identical but the total deaths for the year show a considerable rise over the low total of 3 for 1948.

After final transfers the Registrar General allocated to t district 5 deaths (4 male and 1 female) from tuberculosis of the respiratory system and 1 (male) death from other forms of tuberculosis.

LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE
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15 JAN 1958

VICTOR R. WALKER
District Medical Officer
of Health.

July, 1950.